

On Wednesday, April 9, 2008, the Subcommittee held a hearing titled, “Federal Security: ID Cards and Background Checks.”

The hearing reviewed the current status of Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD-12), which requires all federal employees and contractors to undergo background checks and to use a standardized identification card. These cards will eventually be used for access to federal facilities and computer systems. The hearing released a new Government Accountability Office (GAO) report finding that the program is incurring high costs but providing little benefit to date, and explored the impact that implementation of the program may have on the current security clearance issuance backlog.

Chairman Towns said:

“HSPD-12 helps prevent criminals and terrorists from exploiting federal ID cards to get access to federal buildings and computers. Counterfeiters are always hard at work to create phony documents and IDs, so we also have to work hard to stay ahead of them.

I support this kind of effort, but we have to be careful, otherwise our eagerness to improve security can lead to increased spending without gains in security.

I am concerned by GAO’s finding that even when cards have been issued, the security features are not being used. These features are what make the new cards so much more secure, and also much more expensive – about \$80 to issue and maintain each card in the first year. If agencies do not use these security features, they are just wasting money. Agencies aren’t gaining anything from the new cards if employees just wave them at a security officer instead of putting them through a reader, but they are still spending a lot of money issuing the cards.”

Witnesses:

Hon. Karen Evans, Administrator for Electronic Government and Information Technology, Office

of Management and Budget

Ms. Kathy Dillaman, Associate Director of Investigations, Office of Personnel Management

Ms. Linda Koontz, Director, Information Management Issues, Government Accountability Office

Accompanied by Ms. Brenda Farrell, Director, Defense Capabilities and Management,  
Government Accountability Office

Mr. Michael Sade, Acting Deputy Assistant Commissioner, General Services Administration

Mr. Thomas Wisner, Deputy Chief Information Officer for the Office of the Assistant Secretary  
for Administration and Management, Department of Labor

Mr. Robert Zivney, Vice President, Marketing, Hirsch Electronics, Representing the Security  
Industry Association

Mr. Benjamin Romero, Chair, Information Technology Association of America Security  
Clearance Reform Task Group  
Representing the Security Clearance Reform Coalition

### **Documents and Links**

- [Testimony of The Honorable Karen Evans](#)
- [Testimony of Kathy Dillaman](#)
- [Testimony of Linda Koontz](#)
- [Testimony of Michael Sade](#)
- [Testimony of Thomas Wisner](#)
- [Testimony of Robert Zivney](#)
- [Testimony of Benjamin Romero](#)